THE DUKE DECIDES

A MYSTERY STORY—*By Headon Hill*

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CHAPTER I.

The Man With the Mandate.

At 6 o'clock on a May evening, at an uptown corner of Broadway, in New York City, the bowels of the earth opened and disgorged a crowd of weary-faced men and women who scattered in all directions. They were the employees of a huge "drygoods store," leaving work for the day. It was a stringent rule of the firm that everyone drawing wages, from the smart managers of departments and well-dressed saleladies down to the counting-house drudges and check-boys, should descend into the basement and there file past the time-keeper and a private detective before passing up a narrow staircase, and so out by a sort of stage-door into the side street.

The great plate-glass portals on the main thorofare were not for the working bees of this hive of industry—only for the gay butterflies of fashion, by whom they lived.

The last to come out was a young man dressed in a threadbare suit of tweeds, that somehow hardly seemed American, either in cut or fabric. There might have been a far-away reminiscence of Perthshire moors clinging to them, or earlier memories of a famous creator in Bond street; but suggestion of the reach-me-down shops from which New York clerks clothe themselves there was none. A flush of anger was fading on their owner's face as he came out into the sunlight, leaving a mild annoyance that presently gave place to a grin.

The firm's detective, rendered suspicious by a bulging pocket, had just searched him and had failed to apologize on finding the protuberance to be nothing but a bundle of uneatable sandwiches that were being taken home to confound the landlady of the young man's cheap boarding-house.

The indignity did not rankle long. It was only a detail in the topsy-turvydom that in one short year had changed a subaltern in a crack English cavalry regiment into an ill-paid drudge in a drygoods store. Twelve months before Charles Hanbury had been playing polo and riding gymkhana races in Upper India, but extravagance beyond his means had brought swift ruin in its train. Tired of helping him out of scrapes, his connections had refused further assistance; and, leaving the army, he had come out to "the States" with the idea of roughing it on the western plains. Still misfortune had dogged his steps. A fall down a hatchway on the voyage out had hopelessly lamed him, and he had been compelled to ward off starvation by obtaining his present inglorious berth.

His work—adding up columns of figures entered from the sales tickets—was quite irresponsible, and he was paid accordingly. He drew eight dollars a week, of which five went to his boarding-house keeper.

Limping up —— street, he turned into the Bowery, intending to take his usual homeward route across the big bridge into Brooklyn. Unable to afford a streetcar, he walked to and from the store daily and it was one of his few amusements to study the cosmopolitan life of the teeming and sordid thorofare thru which his way lay.

He was still chuckling over the discomfiture of the tame detective, when his eye was caught by a label in a cheap bootstore. "Three dollars the pair," ran the legend, which drew a rueful sigh from one who had paid—and alas! still owed—as many guineas for a pair of dancing pumps.

"I don't suppose they'd sell me half a pair, for that's all it runs to," he muttered, turning regretfully away from the vamped-up frauds, and in so doing jerking the elbow of a passerby. The victim of his sudden move—a stout, fair man in a light frock coat and a Panama straw hat—stopped and seemed inclined to resent the awkwardness.

"I really beg your pardon," the culprit said with easy politeness. "I was so absorbed in my reflections that I forgot for the moment that the Bowery requires cautious steering."

"You are an Englishman?" returned the other, with a milder countenance. "So am I. No need to apologize. As a fellow countryman in foreign parts, permit me to offer you some liquid refreshment. In other words, come into that dive door and have a drink."

With an imperceptible shrug, Mr. Hanbury allowed himself to be persuaded. He would lose his supper at the boarding-house by the irregularity, but dissipation seldom came his way nowadays, and the prospect of whisky at someone's else expense was tempting. Yes, he had fallen low enough for that! The stout Englishman somehow conveyed the impression that he would not expect to be treated in return by his new acquaintance, who was prepared to take advantage of his liberality. To do him justice, Hanbury's complacence was not entirely due to spirituous longings, but to a homesick instinct aroused by the Cockney accent of the vulgar stranger.

The garish underground saloon into which they descended was almost empty at that early hour of the evening. Drinks having been set before them at one of the circular tables, the host subjected his guest to a scrutiny so searching that its object broke into a laugh.

"You are sizing me up pretty closely," he remarked, with a touch of annoyance.

"Exactly; but not so as to give offense, I hope," was the reply. "I should like to know your name, if you have no objection."

"Hanbury—Charles Hanbury. Perhaps you will make the introduction mutual?" said the younger man, appeased by the other's conciliatory manner.

"Call me Jevons," the stout man answered. "Now, look here, Mr. Hanbury; it's not my game to begin our acquaintance under false pretences. The fact is, I contrived that you should jostle me just now, and so give me a chance to speak. I spotted you as an Englishman and a gentleman a fortnight ago, and I've noticed you pass along the Bowery every day since. I am in need of an Englishman who is also a gentleman to take on a job with a fortune—a moderate fortune—at the back of it."

"You can hardly have mistaken me for an investor," said Hanbury, with a quizzical glance at his threadbare seams and dilapidated boots. "Believe me, I am a very broken-down gentleman; but still, my gentility survives, I suppose, and I am willing to treat it as a commercial asset, if that is what you mean."

Mr. Jevons gulped down his liquor without comment and did not utter another word till the glasses had been replenished. Then, hitching his chair closer, he produced a pocket-book from which he extracted five one-hundred dollar notes.

"Before we leave this place I shall hand these over to you for preliminary expenses—if we come to terms," he said, watching the effect of the display on his companion's face. Satisfied with the eager glance in the tired eyes, he proceeded more confidentially: "There is a risk to be run, but it doesn't amount to much; and if the scheme comes off it will set you on your legs again. Part of this money you will have to spend in a first-class passage to England by the next steamer, and there'll be plenty more for you on your arrival."

"My dear friend, you seem to be a sort of Alladin. If you only knew the existence I have been leading here, without the courage to terminate it, you would be assured of my answer," replied Hanbury, wondering but not caring much what was expected of him. To escape from his drygoods drudgery and return to England with money in his pocket and the prospect of more—why, the ex-cavalry officer felt that he would loot the crown jewels for that! And he said so in so many words.

"Then you're the man for us," was the verdict of Mr. Jevons. "It's a bit on the cross—not burglary, but a little matter of planting some beautifully-imitated paper. Is that too steep for you?"

Hanbury made a wry face, but answered without hesitation:

"Aiding a forgery isn't quite the road to fortune I should have chosen, but beggars—you know the maxim. Society hasn't been too kind to me, and I don't see why I should range myself on its side. Yes, I'll do it; and if I'm caught, stone-breaking at Portland won't be any worse than adding up figures in a subterranean counting-house. Let me have the particulars, Mr. Jevons, and I'll see it thru to the best of an ability that hasn't much to recommend it."

"You shall have the particulars," said the other; then stopped and laughed rather nervously. "You must understand that I am but a subordinate in this matter, and we have reached the only unpleasant part of my task," he went on. "It is not congenial to have to use a threat—even a confidential one; yet I am instructed to do so before I enlighten you further."

The rascal's concern was unmistakably genuine, and Hanbury, with the good-humored tolerance of his class, hastened to reassure him.

"Go on, I can guess what you have to disclose—the pains and penalties for breach of faith, eh?"

Jevons nodded and bent his shiny, perspiring face nearer. "It is a big thing, involving enormous outlay and the interests of an organization commanding great resources," he whispered. "Your life wouldn't be worth five minutes' purchase if you deserted us after you had been entrusted with the details. Now, will you have them on those conditions, or shall we say good-night to each other?"

Hanbury stretched out his hand impatiently for the notes. "Pray satisfy my curiosity and let me have them on those conditions," he said. "My life is of no earthly value to me. Besides, with all my faults, I'm not the one to turn back after putting my hand to the plow. If I do, by all means give me my quietus as mercifully as may be."

"Then here goes," whispered Jevons, mouth to ear. "The game is the planting of faked United States treasury bonds on the Bank of England to the tune of three million sterling—pounds, not dollars, you know. You will proceed to England by the St. Paul, sailing for Southampton the day after tomorrow, and on arrival in London you will at once call on Mr. Clinton Ziegler at the Hotel Cecil. He is our chief, and will give you final instructions as to your part in the campaign. You'll find him a handsome paymaster."

"I look forward to making Mr. Ziegler's acquaintance with interest," replied Hanbury, pocketing the notes which the other passed to him. "Am I to have the pleasure of your company on the voyage?"

"I'm afraid not; my work is here," said Jevons. "And—well, it's not altogether healthy for me on the other side." The confession was accompanied by a wink which forcibly brought it home to the recruit that he had joined the criminal classes. His new friend—"pal," he supposed he ought to call him—evidently thought him worthy of personal confidence.

They had another drink together at the bar and parted outside the saloon, Hanbury making his belated way toward Brooklyn. Once or twice he turned abruptly to see if he was being followed, but the aggressive white Panama hat was nowhere visible, the conclusion being obvious that the astute Mr. Jevons had ascertained his domicile as well as his place of employment before broaching his delicate business.

Tramping along the teeming Bowery and across the footway of the mighty bridge, the ex-hussar enjoyed to the full the exultation of feeling money in his pocket once more. It was not much, and it was as good as spent already in the cost of a passage and an outfit; but it was the earnest of more to come, and, above all, it franked the exile home to England. At the price of his honor, perhaps? Well, yes; but what was honor to a drygoods clerk at eight dollars a week? He might have taken a different view two years ago, when honor stood for something in his creed; but not now, with the world against him.

Entering the sordid boarding-house, he mounted to his top-floor bedroom, aware that he had forfeited his supper of beef-hash and that it was too late to go to the dining-room in quest thereof. His eyrie under the roof, flanked on one side by the apartment of a German car-driver and on the other by that of an Irish porter, was furnished with little else than a bed and a toilet-table.

On the toilet-table lay a telegram addressed to him—the first he had received since he had been in America. The unwonted sight caused his hands to tremble a little as he tore it open, but they trembled a great deal more as he read the fateful words:

"Your uncle and cousin have been killed in a railway accident. Come to England at once. Have cabled a thousand pounds to Morgan's to your credit. —Pattisons."

"Pattisons" were the family solicitors, and he who a moment before had called himself Charles Hanbury now knew that his true description would appear in the next issue of "Debrett" as "Charles Augustus Trevor Fitzroy Hanbury, seventh Duke of Beaumanoir," with a rent-roll of two hundred thousand a year.

And he stood committed, on pain of assassination, to aid and abet in the palming off of bogus bonds on the Bank of England!

CHAPTER II.

On Board the St. Paul.

The St. Paul sped eastwards across the summer sea, and surely of all the human hopes and fears carried by the great liner those locked in the breast of the new duke were the most momentous. To gain a little breathing time, he had booked his passage as plain Charles Hanbury. In the brief interval before sailing he had seen no more of Jevons, but he guessed that that shrewd practitioner would have watched him, or had watched him, on board, even if there was not a spy upon him among his fellow-passengers, and he wished to let it be inferred that his voyage was undertaken solely in observance of the compact made in the Bowery dive.

For as yet he was by no means certain of his attitude towards that compact. It was true that the cast-off wastrel of two days ago was now one of the premier peers of England, hastening home to take possession of his fortune and estates. But where was the good of being a duke if you were to be a dead duke? he argued with a cynicism bred of his misfortunes rather than innate. There had been a genuine ring about the proposal of Jevons that left no doubt as to the reality of the menace held out; the man's reluctance in broaching the penalty of desertion carried conviction that it was no mere flower of speech.

On the whole, the duke was inclined to call on the arch rogue at the Hotel Cecil before incurring a risk that might render his dukedom a transitory possession. Then, if the part he was expected to play proved to be within his powers and without much chance of detection, he might still elect to play it, and so enjoy in security his hereditary privileges.

It will be seen that the seventh duke of Beaumanoir was not troubled with moral scruples and that the principle of noblesse oblige had no place as yet in his somewhat seared philosophy. It was enough for the moment that he had gained something worth having and keeping, and he meant to have it and keep it by the most efficacious method. Whether that method would prove to be connivance in a gigantic crime or the denouncement of the latter to Scotland Yard could only be decided by a personal interview with the mysterious Ziegler. Yes, he would pay the visit to the Hotel Cecil, at any rate, and be guided by what passed there as to his future course of action.

"A penny for your thoughts, Mr. Hanbury," said a gay voice at his elbow, as on the third day of the voyage he leaned over the rail of the promenade deck and ruminated on his dilemma. Wheeling round he looked down into the laughing eyes of a girl, a very dainty and charming girl, who sat next him at the saloon table. No formal introduction had taken place between them for lack of mutual friends, but he had learned from the card designating her place at table that she was Miss Leonie Sherman and it is to be presumed that she had gathered his name in the same way.

"I will earn that penny," he said with mock gravity. "I was debating how far one might legitimately carry the principle of doing evil that good might come."

It was a strange answer to make to a shipboard acquaintance of three days, and Miss Sherman regarded him with a newly-awakened interest.

"It depends," she said, "whether the good is to accrue to yourself or to other people."

"Oh, to myself," he replied, smiling. "I am not a philanthropist—quite the other way about."

"Then, whatever it is, you oughtn't to do it," said the girl, decidedly. "It will be horrid of you to as much as contemplate anything of the kind. You had much better do good lest evil befall, and the opportunity occurs right here, at this very moment."

"I shall be most happy—without prejudice to my intentions as to the reverse of the medal," said eBaumanoir, lightly.

"Then help me to avoid a lecture from my mother by taking me for a promenade," proceeded Leonie, indicating a portly lady who had ascended from the lower deck and was peering about in search. "She is the best and dearest of mothers, but she has set her heart on a vain thing, and it is becoming the least bit tiresome. I can see that she is going to din it into me again, if she catches me. Her idea is that the sole duty of an American girl going to England is to 'spread herself,' as they say out west, to marry an English duke."

His grace of Beaumanoir listened with an unmoved countenance.

"Yes," he said, "to marry a duke might—probably would—be an unmitigated evil. I will help you to avoid it with pleasure. Let us walk by all means, Miss Sherman, if you don't mind my awkward limp."

So they joined the procession of promenaders, and there and then cemented a friendship which ripened quickly, as friendships between the opposite sexes do at sea. The haughty saleladies of the drygoods store had not deigned to notice the counting-house drudge, and Leonie's piquant beauty made instant captive of one who had been deprived of the society of women for over a year. She had all the frank camaraderie of the well-bred American and her eager anticipations of the good time she was to have in Europe were infectious. In her company Beaumanoir was able to forget the dark shadow hanging over him and to give himself up to the enjoyment of the hour. He began by being deeply grateful to her for taking him out of himself, and gratitude to a charming girl with a ravishing figure and a complexion of tinted ivory is like to have its heels trod by a warmer sentiment.

Leonie, in her turn, was interested in the reserved young Englishman, who had so little to say about his doings in America, and less about his position and prospects in his native land. As he paced with his slight limp at her side or lounged with her at the rail, she tried to draw him out, but she could get nothing from him but that he had been in New York on business, and that business was taking him home. Yet, tho reticent on his own affairs, he talked freely about all that concerned herself, and painted vivid word-pictures of the delights that awaited her in London.

The girl, having nothing to conceal, told him freely of herself and of her plans and projects. She and her mother were going to stay with English friends in London till the end of the season, when perhaps they would run over to Paris and Rome for a month before returning to America in the autumn. Her father, Senator Sherman, was to have accompanied them, but he had been detained by public business at Washington and was to join them a little later in London.

On the fifth day of the voyage, as the St. Paul was approaching the Irish coast, Leonie and Beaumanoir were sitting on deck after dinner, chatting in the twilight, when she suddenly laid her hand on his arm.

"I want you to notice that man who has just gone by—the one smoking the fag-end of a cigar in a holder," she whispered, with a gesture towards the stream of passengers passing and repassing between the rows of chairs.

Beaumanoir's gaze followed her indication to an insignificant little figure in a brown covert coat and a tweed cap.

"Yes. What of him?" he asked. He had not spoken to this passenger, but now that attention was called to him he had an idea that the fellow had loomed largely during the last few days.

"That man is watching you, Mr. Hanbury," replied Leonie, with conviction. "I wonder you haven't observed it yourself. Whenever you are talking he hangs about trying to listen; when you are on deck he is on deck; if you go below, he goes below. If you were a fugitive from justice and he a detective, he couldn't shadow you more closely."

The duke winced inwardly.

"I am not a fugitive from justice," he said, with the mental addition of "yet." He could not tell this laughing maiden that the man was probably spying on him in the interest, not of justice, but of crime—to see that he was true to a pledge to place forged bonds; for now that he had been put on his guard he had no doubt that his pretty informant was right. The stranger occupied the cabin next to him, and was always hovering near him in the smoking-room, unobtrusively but persistently.

Thanking the girl for her warning in a careless tone that implied that he had no reason to be anxious, he changed the subject. But before he turned in that night he made it his business to ascertain from his bedroom steward the name of his next-door neighbor, which proved to be Marker.

"Probably Mr. Marker's functions are confined to espionage. If that is a sample of the sort of bravo to be employed should I kick over the traces, I haven't much to fear," he reflected, as he switched off the electric light and composed himself to dream of Leonie Sherman.

CHAPTER III.

A Task Master in Goggles.

The next morning the St. Paul arrived at Southampton, but Beaumanoir contrived to secure a seat in the same compartment of the boat train, and his parting with his new friends was therefore deferred till they reached Waterloo.

He was sorely tempted to enlist the elder lady's favor by making known his proper style and rank; tho, to do her justice, Mrs. Sherman's fondness for the peerage was largely a humorous fiction on her daughter's part. The senator's wife was really a simple-minded body, with an abiding admiration for the unattainable, and the British aristocracy was naturally included in that category.

But the sight of Mr. Marker's covert coat hovering near them on the arrival platform checked the duke's intention, which the next moment was rendered unnecessary by Mrs. Sherman herself.

"Come and see us, Mr. Hanbury," she said, extending the tips of her fingers in farewell. "We are to be the guests of some good friends of ours at 140 Grosvenor Gardens, and we know them well enough to make ourselves at home. The senator will be over in a week or two, and he'll be glad to thank you for your politeness."

"I will pay my respects without fail," Beaumanoir responded; and a minute later, after a warmer pressure of Leonie's well-gloved hand, he stood watching their cab with its load of "saratogas" drive down the incline. By the void in his heart he knew that the girl in the coquettish toque, who had just repeated her mother's invitation with her eyes, was all the world to him.

He turned to look after his scanty baggage with a sigh. How different it would all have been if he had chosen some other route to his Brooklyn boarding-house on the eventful night when the plausible Jevons had waylaid him! All would have been plain sailing, and he could have asked Leonie with a clear conscience to share his new-found honors and wealth. As it was he stood committed to a felonious enterprise which would fill her with contempt and loathing did she know of it; tho, if he abondoned it, instinct told him he was a doomed man.

The sight of the insignificant spy Marker lurking behind a pile of luggage reminded him that his peril might commence at any moment if he showed any sign of inconstancy to his pledge. Not that he anticipated trouble from the covert-coated whippersnapper himself, but the mere fact of it having been thought worth while to shadow him across the Atlantic spelled danger, and suggested an organization that would stop at nothing to safeguard itself.

However, he had made up his mind to call on the mysterious Ziegler, and by doing so at once he might prove his fidelity and secure a respite from this unpleasant espionage. Summoning a hansom he bade the driver take him to the Hotel Cecil; and, looking back, he saw Marker following in another cab.

In the few minutes that elapsed before he was driven into the courtyard of the palatial hotel he settled a problem that had been vexing him not a little during the voyage. Should he introduce himself to Ziegler as the Duke of Beaumanoir or as plain Charles Hanbury, the name by which he had been "engaged"? If he was for a brief space to be the consort of professional thieves, he would prefer to lead a double life—to perform his misdeeds as a commoner, and to keep his dukedom spotless. So it was that he gave his name as Hanbury to the clerk in the bureau of the hotel.

While waiting the return of the bellboy who was sent to announce his arrival, Beaumanoir looked about for Marker, but the spy was nowhere visible in or from the entrance hall. Having shepherded him to the fold, it was evidently no part of his duty to obtrude himself until further orders.

A minute later the neophyte in crime was limping up the grand staircase in the wake of the bellboy, who conducted him to one of the best private suites on the first floor overlooking the embankment. It was a moment charged with electricity as the Duke of Beaumanoir found himself face to face with the man who had hired him in his poverty, and now held him fetter-bound in his good fortune.

(To be continued next Saturday.)

OUR ROCKY DIET

High Percentage of Ground Rock in Some Baking Powders.

Collier's Weekly.

All Americans have indigestion. Certain baking powders are 30 per cent ground rock. That is what we eat. Diseased beef gives us something worse than indigestion. Even peas have copper coloring. Living on poison cannot strengthen us as a nation. When we quite realize this, the senate and our state legislatures may be forced to act. It is agreeable to get on in the world, and there is more profit in poisoned than in genuine food. If the beef trust fulfilled the laws of hygiene, perhaps it would be deprived of even that paltry 2 per cent. "So long," says Mr. Ghent, "as gelatine, timothy seed and aniline remain at their present low prices, the supply of red raspberry jam is likely to be equal to all demands," and he quotes Tennyson aptly:

"* * * Chalk and alum and plaster
are sold to the poor for bread,
And the spirit of murder works in the very means of life."

If all the farms in Ohio had maple orchards, they probably could not, in the opinion of the dairy and food commissioner, supply the so-called maple sugar sold in that state. Most lemon extracts are made from coal tar dyes. Butter is made over, into temporary salability, from what the Ohio reports call "stale, rancid, dirty and unsalable butter in various degrees of putrefaction." Not one sample out of fifty analyzed in Ohio, in 1899, met the standard butter tests. Poisoned drugs are administered at the bedside. Adulterated milk furnishes the youthful body strength. At the annual meeting of the National Consumers' league, about three weeks ago, it was pointed out that not only is flour frequently adulterated, but there are two mills, one in Ohio and one in Kansas, which turn out a certain grade of Indian corn flour used only to adulterate wheat flour. Adulteration and poison are a large part of the sustenance of every stage of life and every class. How long shall we endure it?

THE VULGAR FRACTION.

Chicago Journal.

"Humble as I am," said a loud-voiced spouter at a meeting, "I still remember that I am a fraction of this magnificent country."

"You are, indeed," said a bystander, "and a vulgar one at that."

PAT WAS RESIGNED.

Boston Traveler.

A South Boston young couple were disappointed for the fourth time last week by the addition of a daughter and not a son to their family.

"Never mind, Pat, she will marry a boy, anyway," said the wife, pressing her husband's hand.

"Yes, you've told me that before, Mary," said the gloomy husband. "But I am resigned to it now. Marrying is the only way we are ever going to get a boy into our family."

CONSUL AT HUALTEPEC

By IZOLA FORRESTER

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Some day it will boom, and expand, and have a plaza, and an excursion steamboat line, and a hotel with a palm garden—some day, perhaps, when they have cut the neck of Panama, and the swarm comes down from the States. Just at present it is a scattered handful of little yellow and white houses, which you cannot even distinguish a mile at sea, only a spreading grove of many palms that rise along the shore like gigantic feather dusters. A couple of miles inland there is a tired volcano, which forms a large amethyst blur against a dove-gray sky, and makes an interesting back drop for the setting of Hualtepec.

Bosworth landed in June from a New York trade schooner. The fact that he sold nothing, bought nothing, and did nothing, endeared him to the populace. It is a warm and trying climate. Strenuosity is unpopular.

Bosworth intimated that he had merely dropped in on the way to South America. The particular schooner he had been able to apply persuasion to went only as far as Hualtepec. He would wait for another schooner with an inclination towards the Argentine Republic. There were promising signs of a revolution, he told the doctor and the resident missionary, when they gave him the hand of welcome and the word of peace. He had never seen a revolution. Yes, it was curiosity, he admitted to the missionary—also a spirit of adventure. Oh, yes! Also, and incidentally, he was running away, he told them in cheerful confidence upon the doctor's veranda, over coffee and the small, dark cigars in which his soul newly delighted.

The doctor was silent and attentive. Such things had been before, even in Hualtepec.

"From anything special?" asked the missionary.

"Work," answered Bosworth, and the subject dropped, being strictly a private affair, and not affecting the moral tone of the community.

The revolutionary cause in the Argentine Republic languished during July, most of the revolutionists being in New York raising funds and fervor. No schooner showed up with southerly intentions, and Bosworth's spirit of adventure also languished. It was mighty comfortable at Hualtepec. He lazed, and became a lotus muncher, and let the doctor tell him he needed a rest. He had been thin, and spooky around the eyes when he landed, but after a month he began to brace up and take to the climate. It was the hope of the girl who waited up north that gave him strength. He told the doctor's wife about her—the girl named Helen.

He had met her at a reception at the Art Students' league. A first night view of somebody's salon stuff it was. Stapleton had been with him. She had sat alone on one of the long Flemish oak settees, a slim, inconspicuous figure in brown. Stapleton had stood still, and intently surveyed her thru half-closed eyes. It had made a nice bit of study, the seal-brown dress, the sweep of a brown marten stole from her throat to the floor, the velvet hat with its single plume, and beneath, brown hair, brown eyes and colorless skin with the cream of ivory in its softness. She had been looking at the people, not the pictures.

Bosworth had left his companion, and, standing close to a washy blur of French impressionism, had been peering at it thru his rimless eye-glasses, and the girl had been looking at him with the same contented interest Stapleton was giving her. Suddenly Bosworth had turned and seen her. There had been a full, long look between them, the look of two who had met as strangers in a strange world, and yet had recognized in each other the one waited for.

Stapleton had found out who she was later in the evening.

"She doesn't scrib, daub or sculp, and she isn't studying for the stage. She's just a regular girl. Father's one of the directors—W. H. Marshall, interested in phosphate somewhere in Florida. Got an artist cousin who's exhibiting this year, and won a medal. They are all right. Andy Phipps knows them."

Bosworth had said nothing, but he had started in immediately to improve his acquaintance with Phipps.

And the doctor's wife drew her own conclusion from the look in Bosworth's eyes and the retrospective smile on his lips. He never told her the story beyond the ripening of the acquaintance with Phipps, but she knew a wedding lay somewhere ahead to finish off the chapter.

It was all very cosy and congenial, until one day Billy Stapleton walked across the gangplank of the "Yemassee," when she made her monthly landing at Hualtepec, and looking over the heads of the natives, saw one familiar face, and called out, "Hello Bos!"

Bosworth responded joyously, and asked if he were a relief expedition sent after the missing.

"You're not missing," laughed Stapleton. "You're dead. Craig of the Times-Herald found your body piled in with a bunch of revolutionists at the grand staircase of the Governor-General's palace in Japala. Full account one week ago, with photos of bunch, staircase and hero himself." He gripped Bosworth's hand happily. "Awfully glad to see you, Tommy."

"Thanks. Any news?"

Stapleton looked back at the sea he had come from.

"The Marshalls are all down at Palm Beach. I just left them."

"Interested in phosphate?"

Stapleton grinned boyishly.

"Not exactly. I'm going to be consul here for awhile, and had to show up at once, but the wedding will be next month all the same."

Bosworth did not show any curiosity. He swallowed the statement whole as it was given, added a flash of intuition, and marveled in his heart whether he had ever hated a man as he suddenly hated one Billy Stapleton.

The following night, comfortably and connectedly, up on the doctor's veranda, Stapleton identified the remains to the satisfaction of the missionary and doctor. Bosworth had been a newspaper artist up in Minneapolis once upon a time. He had made a hit on some congressional cartoon, and had come down to New York to win out. They had worked together during the same campaign up north. Bosworth had stuck to conservative art, and a moderate salary on the losing side, and Stapleton had trotted all over the state with the Hon. T. K. Healy, sitting on his left at the meetings in tent or town hall, and most industriously fixing up good stuff for the yellowest yellow in town while the Hon. T. K. fired hot-shot into the crowd with the aid of a heavy bass and a stereopticon.

Sometimes the stereopticon kicked, or the operator lay stricken with campaign paralysis at a wayside inn. Then Stapleton laid aside his little pad and pencil and went at the stereopticon with celerity and capability. All of which lay to his credit.

The good stuff had gone with a bang, like T. K.'s hot-shot, and when the campaign was dead and gone, Healy was sent up to congress by a grateful, faithful crowd of constituents, and so far remembered the artistic gentleman on his left that he spoke a kindly word for him in the plum orchard, and the consulship at Hualtepec lay as a tangible temptation under Stapleton's nose.

But under the strain of conservative art, and a steady salary, Bosworth had gone to pieces. There was nothing special the matter with him. He had simply collapsed from overwork, and had come south on a ticket-of-leave from hard labor.

So far Stapleton told, but not a word of a girl up north. He chatted of his own affair with frank happiness to anyone who would listen to him, and began to plan on a wonderful habitation for her who was to come, something between the grass-thatched bungalow of a tropical princess and a modern Queen Anne cottage down on Long Island. And Bosworth watched the preparations for the bride with a dogged interest and a loneliness he would not acknowledge to himself.

Then there came a day, three weeks after he landed, when the consul lay stretched out in the doctor's house up on the slope of the tired volcano, where a breeze was a possibility with the thermometer at 100 degrees, and every day Bosworth went up to keep an eye on him.

We have a fever down here that is unique and original. After you have been told that it is malaria, and typhoid, and intermittent, they settle down, and say it is an irregular fever, rising from general debility and change of climate, which is a safe and neat diagnosis. Stapleton had it badly, the doctor said. Mornings he was weak and chilly, and nights he sailed up to 105 degrees, and told everything he knew—past, present and future. And mixed in with campaign and shop talk, there was a steady cry for Helen.

"They are to be married in a week," Bosworth told the doctor one morning about two. They had stepped from Stapleton's room, out on the wire-screened veranda. It was very still. Only a vague, nebulous luminosity lay over the sea far below them. Here and there in the darkness, inland, the outline of a mountain rose, flat and formless, against the sky. "She is at Palm Beach. If he is as far gone as you say, I think she ought to be sent for."

"He'll last about three days maybe," said the doctor. "Can you reach her?"

"I can ride over to Santa Ana and cable."

Stapleton set up a high call on the inside, and the doctor went in. Bosworth lit his pipe and sat on the veranda rail, his knees up, his back against a post, staring off at the low, purplish outline of mountains. Beyond them, if one went far enough, there lay another ocean, and one might find a boat bound for the southern coast. Somehow it didn't seem such a terrible chance, lying under a bunch of dead revolutionists at the foot of the grand staircase in Japala, or anywhere else. Perhaps they might reach the top of the grand staircase. He smiled grimly. There was a fighting devil in his heart, and he couldn't fight Stapleton. If it had been anyone else, it wouldn't have hit so deep. But Stapleton had known of her half promise to him, a provisional half promise, of course, in words, but there had been more than words. He shut his teeth closer on the amber pipe stem and smiled. There was something even Stapleton couldn't take away from him. He had an idea that he was the only that he was the only man who had ever man who had ever kissed Helen in just that way.

When he came back, she had told him, she would say for sure, but Bosworth had looked down in her eyes and had said, if he came back. It made a difference—to Bosworth.

And Stapleton had played foul, or was it Helen? He drew a deep breath, and hunted out a match for his pipe. From the open door came the low, steady roll of Stapleton's voice, now mumbled and indistinct, now rising clear and natural. He caught some of it.

"Helen, Helen, come here! Helen!"

The match went out in Bosworth's hand. Whoever was to blame, one thing was certain. Two people were satisfied, and he was the crowd. Anyhow, a woman had a right to change her mind. Perhaps she had not cared. He pulled himself together and dropped from the rail. Stapleton's voice was lower. He always grew weaker along about daybreak. If he lasted two days or three, she could get there in time. There was really no use to send. She could do no good. It was simply Stapleton's right to have her there, and she would want to come. He was merely the man to send the message.

It was after 11 when he rode into Santa Ana. It was not a pleasure trip. The horse tumbled over in half an hour, and Bosworth went back on a new one, but the message to Palm Beach was sent. She couldn't catch any regular steamers, he knew. Old W. K. Marshall would have to stand for a yacht, but he knew she would come.

At first he had thought he would wait. As a matter of good form, it was his duty to meet her and take her to the house up on the slope of the tired volcano, but he knew in his heart it was not merely a duty. He was starved for even a glimpse of her. By the second night he had made up his mind. It was a little after 8 when he rode up to the doctor's and climbed the veranda steps. Stapleton would be asleep. He would say goodby and slip away quietly from the joy of the two.

The doctor met him at the head of the steps.

"She's in there," he said. "The boat got in an hour ago. The queer part is that he knows her and is quiet. If he sleeps tonight he will pull thru."

"Will he?" Bosworth spoke dully. He stood still where the doctor left him, staring at the screen door of Stapleton's room. The one thought that whirled thru his mind was that she was there, a few feet from him, and he must not see her. And while he stood, the door opened and Helen came out, soft-footed and dream-like in the twilight dusk.

"Doctor, wait a moment." She came directly towards him and Bosworth could not stir. As their eyes met, she stopped short, her lips parted, her face uplifted with the old, glad welcome he knew so well.

"You!" She stretched out her hands to him, her voice tell-tale with emotion. "Tom!"

He stood erect, his hands clenched at his sides, and looked beyond her at the screen door.

"I'm glad you came at once. He will get well now."

"Of course he will! He must for Nell's sake." She let her hands fall in surprise. "We had to come at once. She wouldn't wait a day. Mother and father and Uncle Howard came, too, and they are to be married tomorrow."

"Who?" Bosworth's voice was blunt and harsh.

"Why, Nell and Mr. Stapleton. You know her, my little artist cousin, Nell. It was her picture that—that brought us together." This very softly.

"He called her Helen." This as in a daze.

"We are both called Helen Marshall."

He shut his eyes for an instant. It was hard to stand steady with a world of nightmare dreams falling to nothingness around him.

"Tom."

He opened his eyes. She was smiling, and her eyes were tender with an understanding of his trouble.

"Aren't you sorry?"

It was wonderfully quiet on the veranda. The doctor came back up the steps, whistling softly to himself and passed thru the screen door to where Stapleton lay, easy and happy and asleep, with the hand of his little bride-elect resting on his tired head.

And the two out among the shadows on the veranda laughed. Life was mighty sweet at Hualtepec.

BOYHOOD OF GREAT MEN.

Chicago Tribune.

The subject of this sketch was born in a village near Heidelberg, Germany, early in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Even as a child he was noted for his thrift and for his investigating turn of mind.

One day he killed a neighbor's cat that had been eating his young chickens. He skinned the cat, took the hide to a dealer and sold it for a pfennig.

"Gee," he exclaimed. "There is money in furs. Some day I am going to deal in them as a regular business."

Years afterward, that boy, having grown to manhood and emigrated to America, became the John Jacob Astor of commerce and the founder of one of the wealthiest and most aristocratic English families of the present day.

QUITE POSSIBLE.

Philadelphia Press.

"I see by the papers," remarked Luschman, "a certain doctor claims that the bite of a mosquito may lead to paralysis."

"Well," remarked the temperance crank, "I can readily believe that a mosquito might become paralyzed by biting some people I know."

NEGLIGEE OF CREPE AND LACE.

Of pink double-width crepe de Chine is this charming robe. The lace used is the new cutwork in ecru, worked in pink. Three graduated flounces trim the skirt, which hangs full from a deep yoke, over which falls the full bertha, set on a yoke, this being outlined by black velvet ribbon, ending in a bow and long ends in front. The sleeves are wrinkled to the elbow, a fall of lace draping the arm, with a pretty bow of the velvet tied above. The pink taffeta slip has featherbone reeds run in the frills, to give the flounces just the right flare.

Defective Page